



Cultural Survival

Promoting the human rights and cultural autonomy of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities since 1972



First Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

May 21, 2002

Provisional Agenda Item 5 – General Statements

Statement by Larry Childs, Ethnosphere Coordinator, Cultural Survival, Inc., USA

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for providing this opportunity to address the first session of the Permanent Forum. On behalf of the board, staff and advisors to Cultural Survival, we appreciate the readiness of this group to take on the very important tasks and challenges that await you. We recognize the tremendous potential of the Permanent Forum and have noted that a strong spirit of collaboration and expectation has been generated in this room and in the hallways over the past several days. Today we are here to reaffirm the commitment of Cultural Survival to the advancement of the work of the Permanent Forum and briefly describe our new ethnosphere initiative.

As an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting the human rights and cultural autonomy of indigenous peoples for the last 30 years, we are well placed to offer the Permanent Forum and the wider indigenous movement many valuable services. Our expertise is in the areas of research, communication and information services reaching indigenous peoples and organizations as well as non-indigenous advocates, experts and general audiences. To most effectively and accurately promote the voices and issues of indigenous peoples we are guided by an ever-increasing network of indigenous colleagues and non-indigenous experts. Until recently we have carried out our mission through dissemination of our publications, development of education programs and materials, advocacy campaigns and funding of special projects with indigenous communities.

Today, as these programs continue, we have started to take far greater advantage of communication and information technologies for networking, gathering and organizing information, and disseminating information. We are also entering into collaborative agreements with global networks and media organizations that will bring greater public awareness to the real issues and concerns of indigenous peoples. As a part of this initiative we are framing indigenous issues in a broader global context in which loss of culture or violation of rights results in not only the suffering of those who have been violated, but a threat to all of humanity and our collective hopes and dreams for the future.

Ethnosphere Program Concept & Description

The ethnosphere program at CS is an endeavor to house on the Internet an unparalleled, continually renewed source of reliable information about and for endangered indigenous and un-represented peoples. The ethnosphere will celebrate the richness and diversity of indigenous cultures and lifeways, but also identify threats to this diversity and successes in addressing the threats. It will challenge stakeholders and the public at large to work towards a future in which indigenous peoples are able to maintain their language and cultures in the face of strong assimilatory pressures, enjoy unrivalled access to their ancestral lands and waters, and pursue their own development agendas as sovereign peoples.

Goals

- Provide opportunities for indigenous peoples and experts to share knowledge, collaborate and fund-raise
- Educate the global community about indigenous cultures, issues and our collective role in creating a more sustainable and equitable future for all peoples
- Advocate for the rights, voices and visions of indigenous peoples
- Celebrate the diversity of the Ethnosphere, the great legacy of cultural worlds

What is the Ethnosphere?

While the atmosphere comprises all the life-sustaining gasses that envelope the planet and the biosphere comprises all the earths' living organisms, the Ethnosphere comprises the diversity of peoples, languages and cultures that give meaning to human existence. *[The Ethnosphere is] a notion perhaps best defined as the sum total of all thoughts, beliefs, myths, and intuitions made manifest today in the myriad cultures of the world. The Ethnosphere is humanity's greatest legacy. It is the product of our dreams, the embodiment of our hopes, the symbol of all that we are and all that we have created as a wildly inquisitive and astonishingly adaptive species.* The health of the Ethnosphere, and therefore the vitality of all humanity, relies on how well we respond to the many immediate threats faced by indigenous peoples.

General Activities

Project goals will be achieved through the following activities:

- Provide general and detailed descriptions concerning the historic context and current issues facing indigenous peoples at global and regional levels using multiple formats and media
- Offer comprehensive, searchable reference information about indigenous peoples, places and issues that impact on their lives and livelihoods
- Produce, archive and disseminate continuously updated news and analysis on the issues and cultural worlds of indigenous peoples
- Produce and disseminate educational resources.
- Serve and inspire audiences of many distinctive needs and demands such as indigenous peoples and organizations, experts in international relations and development, scholars, policy makers, students, educators, travelers and the general public
- Facilitate information sharing and collaborative agreements among indigenous peoples, experts and concerned organizations
- Inspire visitors to appreciate diverse languages, practices, peoples, and challenge them to do what they can to stem the tide of cultural extinction
- Link visitors to advocacy campaigns that influence public policy decisions
- Link specific Ethnosphere content areas with advocacy groups, indigenous organizations, the media and other sites.

ETHNOSPHERE COMPONENTS	GENERAL INFORMATION	EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES SERVICES	INDIGENOUS NEWS	PEOPLES ORGANIZATIONS DATABASE	ETHNOSPHERE QUARTERLY DATABASE	FUNDING RESOURCES
PROJECTS / SERVICES	Describes, in various formats and media, the state of the wider Ethnosphere along with its major facets and issues. Emphasis is on indigenous peoples.	Introduction to Indigenous Peoples' Curriculum with stand-alone lesson plans for middle, high school and introductory college levels.	Weekly indigenous news with headlines and spotlight stories by region released to news syndicates, e-lists, posted & archived.	Provides data, essays and links regarding peoples, organizations and networks searchable by peoples, places and issues.	All back issues of Cultural Survival Quarterly (2000+ articles) available on-line. A first stop for researching indigenous issues.	Resources and referrals for indigenous organizations seeking funding and assistance on grassroots initiatives.